

## Looking for More Space-sensitive Korean Studies\*

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*Korean studies are in crisis because they have fallen prey to the territorial trap associated with methodological territorialism and methodological nationalism. In order to overcome this situation, this paper suggests the studies on Korea to be more active in accepting the socio-spatial perspective that emphasize the inseparability of society and space. In particular, paying special attention to the 4 important dimensions of socio-spatial relations, such as place, territory, network and scale, it examines the ways in which these 4 dimensions are overlapped, interconnected and dynamically interacting with one another from the perspective of “multi-scalar networked territoriality”. In conclusion, I argue that the Korean studies need to understand the variegated and multi-scalar nature of Korea, a place, which is constituted through complex interactions among diverse political, social, economic and cultural forces and processes that operate in various places and at diverse geographical scales.*

*Keywords: social space, Korean studies, networked territoriality, place, scale, developmental state*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Korean studies, defined as the “knowledge system on Korea” (Kim 2003) or “general humanities and social sciences on Korea” (Kim 2002), have developed noticeably over recent decades. However, they have fallen prey to the territorial trap that solidifies the territoriality of nation states. In particular, strong influences of nationalist and statist ideologies and excessive

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reliance on methodological nationalism that focuses on the geographic scale of nation states are causing several problems. More specifically, the trend has impeded proper understandings of the spatial differentiations and spatial embeddedness in Korea as a place and of the lives of the Korean people. Moreover, it has overlooked the influences of multi-scalar integrations, contests, and crossovers of social powers and processes working on global, national, urban, and other spatial scales. For these reasons, traditional Korean studies have failed to propose epistemologies and methodologies that explain the changing identity of Korea and the lives of the Korean people in the contexts of globalization and localization. Several researchers have criticized Korean studies as skewed nationalism (Jun 2005) or overly centralized epistemologies that ignore localities (Ko 2005; Lee 2007); these studies hardly react to such criticisms.

On the basis of this critical perspective, it is clear that traditional research on Korean studies has had several serious ontological and epistemological limitations due to the lack of spatial imagination. Moreover, more serious attention has to be paid to social-spatial perspectives that emphasize the internal relationship between society and space for the advancement of Korean studies. Aspatial social theories and historical perspectives have obvious limitations because Korean studies are basically a discipline examining Korea as a region or a place. Therefore, consideration of various aspects of the lives of the Korean people in the overlapping context of four important socio-spatial dimensions (place, territoriality, scale, and network) is recommended. In conclusion, the Korean studies need to consider the variegated and multi-scalar nature of Korea, a place being constructed out of complex interactions among diverse political, social, economic, and cultural forces and processes.

## II. THE TERRITORIAL TRAP AND KOREAN STUDIES IN CRISIS

Korean studies originated from national studies, or *Guk-hak*, whose purpose was to suggest counter discourses to the Choseon studies carried out by Japanese researchers during the Japanese Colonial Rule (Park H. B.

2005); these studies have received positive support from the South Korean government since the Liberation of the Korean Peninsula in 1945 because they have been essential in the establishment of national identities and in the production of national ruling ideologies. In this sequence, they have seen remarkable growth. However, Korean studies are in crisis because the contemporary trend of glocalization, a term describing the recent phenomena of both globalization and localization, has been progressing simultaneously; this trend fiercely challenges the traditional methodologies, research issues, and subjects. The process of globalization, in particular, has induced trans-boundary flows of people, resources, and capitals, causing not only fundamental changes in the political, cultural, social, and economic natures of Korea but also requiring totally renewed epistemologies, which used to be based on national identities and territorialities on South Korea. In addition, the contemporary trend of localization focusing on autonomy and differences between regions and cities suggests a drastic change in the tradition of Korean Studies, which have seen Korea as a homogeneous spatial place and overly emphasized the national-level social, political, economic, and cultural processes and forces. Korean studies are in the height of crisis; serious questions regarding the definitions of place-ness and boundaries, as well as the identity of the Korean people, are essential for the continual development of Korean studies. This crisis in Korean studies is caused by a traditional trend that has fallen prey to the territorial trap associated with 'methodological nationalism' and the absolute conceptions on space only focusing on physical spaces.

### 1. The Territorial Trap of Korean Studies

John Agnew proposed the term "territorial trap" when criticizing traditional epistemologies on the spatiality and territoriality of states. He noted that because of three false assumptions, the traditional modern social sciences have fallen prey to this "territorial trap" (Agnew 1994). The first of the false assumptions is that the sovereignty of modern states requires definitely bounded territorial spaces. Second, domestic factors are completely separated from international matters. Third, territorial states work as vessels that geographically contain modern societies. Various theories of modern social

sciences hold these three assumptions and firmly consider the world to be composed of bounded and exclusive territories; they ignore the fact that, indeed, these territories are socially constructed and undergo continuous discords and controversies. In other words, Agnew criticized the trend as an improper theoretical attitude that considers the territoriality of states as a fixed structure that operates as a background of regulatory processes and socio-political conflicts rather than as a constructive mode consisting of the processes of regulation, social conflict, and political struggle. He noted that this trend falls prey to the “territorial trap.”

Several traditional Korean studies affirming the “given territoriality” of the Korean state have fallen prey to the territorial trap. Korean studies, which have been developed as Area Studies conducted by foreign researchers or National Studies executed by South Korean researchers, are fundamentally studies of a place defined as “Korea.” Because that place is essentially based on the territorial space of the national state of South Korea, Korean studies have inborn characteristics of studies of places or regions confined by the sovereign territoriality of the Republic of Korea. This is especially true for Korean studies that are supported by the state that required the establishment of national identities and the production of ruling ideologies; these studies have thoroughly worked as ideological instruments that have reproduced national and ethnic territorial ideologies.

A contemporary debate regarding the development of capitalism in South Korea nicely demonstrates the crisis of Korean studies caused by the territorial trap. In particular, the conflict between the theory of the embryo of capitalism, which is suggested by nationalist researchers, and the theory of colonial modernization, brought up by new-rightist researchers, obviously shows the academic distortions caused by the territorial trap. The theory of the embryo of capitalism, based on the so-called “internal development theory” that insists that Korean capitalism has been self-grown in the historical context of Korea, is a theory arguing that the power of the development of Korean capitalism has been inherent in the Korean society (Jun 2005, 75). This theory, supported mostly by nationalist researchers, has gone far in overcoming the vestiges of the Japanese colonial view of history which spiritually dominated the Koreans’ world view under Japanese colonial rule. However, it has made a serious error: the theory of the embryo

of capitalism has overlooked the historical fact that following the process of transnational industrialization, led by Japan in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the resulting colonial modernization was a significant starting point for the capitalist modernization of South Korea. New-rightist researchers have supported the theory of colonial modernization and objected to the theory of the embryo of capitalism, asserting emphatically that such an error is the result of theoretical distortion of Korean reality caused by excessive nationalist inclinations and the leftist ideologies of Korean studies researchers. In this context, there has been an assertion that many South Korean intellectuals, absorbed in nationalist territorial ideologies, have been collectively captivated by “the specter of Hegel” that absolutizes nations (Jun 2005, 82).

Researchers who support the theory of colonial modernization insist that the process of colonial modernization is a universal trajectory of the development of capitalism observed in most third world countries; in this sense, they sharply note the territorial trap in the theory of the embryo of capitalism on the Korean capitalist development. However, the theory of colonial modernization is not completely liberated from the territorial trap, either. Once one decides to liberate its epistemological approach out of the territorialized frame of nation-states and begins to see the capitalist development at a global scale, a robust understanding of the development of capitalism cannot be seen in terms of the political, social, or economic processes at a national scale, but better be understood on the basis of the global flow of capital, systems of exchange, geographical transfer of value, asymmetric relationships between center and periphery, and uneven development. Researchers who support the theory of colonial modernization propose overcoming the spatial limitation of nation-state to properly explain the development of Korean capitalism, but they wrongly conflate the formation and development of capitalist economic system with the economic growth of a nation-state, called “Republic of Korea”, and focus on investigating the factors that have contributed to the modernization of nation-state South Korea rather than approaching the transnational processes of capitalist exploitation, class struggle, and uneven development. For these reasons, the theory of colonial modernization has also fallen prey to the territorial trap. Furthermore, several new-rightist researchers concentrate on

ideological struggles within the nation-state. They have applied their efforts toward justifying the roles of Japanese imperialism and President Park Jeong-hee's developmental dictatorship. Therefore, criticism of the theory of colonial modernization is difficult to counter, in that it is an academically distorted theory whose major role is to counter the theory of the embryo of capitalism.

## 2. Methodological Nationalism and the Crisis of Multi-scalar Regional Studies

Theoretical attitudes that absolutize the territoriality of nation-states are naturally related to the epistemology of "methodological nationalism." Neil Brenner (2002) criticized the national scale centered epistemology of traditional social science theories; he criticized the academic trend regarding the spatial scale of the nation-state as the most ontologically important element of modern political systems, or "methodological nationalism." Korean studies have shown a strong tendency towards methodological nationalism. Indeed, because "Korea" as a place, which is the object of the Korean Studies, is defined on the basis of the territorial space of a nation-state, the Korean Studies are basically the studies on a place or a region defined at the national scale. Even though we accept this, however, when some academics have described the influence and significance of South Korea based on the geographical scale and attempted to explain and theorize about Korea as a place and Korean people life predominantly within the mold of this national scale, such tendencies are quietly problematic; South Korea and the people within it are simultaneously influenced by diverse social, political, economic, cultural, and historic forces and processes that are formed and operated on various geographical scales (e.g. the global, Pacific Rim, East Asia, sub-national regions, cities, apartment complexes, villages, and so on). Their formation and influences of these processes are not limited to the national scale. Therefore, the tendency of Korean studies to focus only on the national scale overlooks the multi-scalar characteristics of Korea and most likely causes distorted or skewed understandings of Korea.

The problem of "methodological nationalism" in traditional Korean studies is sometimes regarded as moderated due to the recent trend towards localization and increasing numbers of research on regions and localities

within Korea. In particular, local studies that have been conducted in recent times are focusing on processes at the regional and urban scales and, contributing to improving the perspectives of Korean studies. Furthermore, local researchers are attempting to understand the relationships and processes occurring on several different scales, including the central, regional, and national scales; their attempts are not just empirical studies of places at the regional or urban scales but also of alternatives to traditional “methodological nationalism.”

Kim (2000, 9), for example, criticized traditional Korean studies imbued with “methodological nationalism”; he noted that such a tradition premised dichotomous perspectives, including the center versus the periphery, the whole versus the parts, forward versus backward, refined versus crude, and superior versus inferior; he claims that regions and regional scales have always been connected to the latter categories in these dichotomies. Ko (2005, 119) explained the reasons why regions and regional cultures have been ignored or misunderstood, starting the following: (1) due to the effects of grand theories and discourses, traditional studies have tended to consider only whole systems or uniform explanations as meaningful, and (2) the flow of modernization, the accompanying national homogenization processes and the emphasis on nationalism and statism have disregarded regional peculiarities and deepened inclined perspectives that distinguished the national (or Seoul) as central and the regions (or locals) as peripheries. Oh (2004, 23) stated that “although interactions between locals and state have not been always conducted equally, local people have protested against dominant forces and maintained or renovated their identities by subjective and active confrontations and negotiations,” emphasizing the activeness of locals and local people in refuting traditional state-centered or centralized epistemologies. In addition, Kim (2004, 301) argued that the simple dichotomy that bisects the state and maintains hegemonies and oppressed locals needs to be sublated and that local history research should be conducted along with total history studies. He emphasized that total history studies are difficult to conduct without connections with local history research, and that balanced perspectives on the interrelations between the center and the peripheries are required in studies on local societies.

These perspectives emphasizing locals’ active subjectivities against the

center, or state, do not regard matters on the local or urban scales as passive consequences of the processes operating at the national scale. In other words, they suggest the possibility that Korean studies could overcome traditional methodological nationalism by discussing the political, social, economic, cultural, and historical processes on urban or local scales that are able to influence the central or national scales.

Despite such implications and contributions, local studies are not completely free of the territorial trap. Indeed, Korean local studies have been developed along with the advancement of local autonomy system in South Korea since the early 1990s. Because several local governments have required administrative strategies and economic policies that are suitable to local characteristics (Lee 2007, 182), numerous Korean local studies have been subsumed by “methodological territorialism,” a problematic methodology that absolutizes the “given” administrative territories of states. Spatial scales, where the scopes of locals and events are defined and social relations take place, are not pre-given, but materially and discursively constructed through political, social, economical, and cultural processes. However, because local studies have been focusing on institutionalized administrative territories, they are likely to overlook other important local phenomena that are not directly related to the administrative territorial issues, as well as trans-territorial events and processes.

Furthermore, although local studies emphasize locals’ active subjectivities against the center or state, they also tend to consider the local or regional as sub-scales of the national scale of South Korea. In other words, local studies are still influenced by “methodological nationalism.” For instance, Ko (2005, 115) suggested that studies of locals and regions in South Korea should be described as “local studies”, not as “area studies” or “regional studies”, because they focus on “locals” of South Korea. His suggestion shows a strong methodological nationalistic perspective: locals can be understood only in the context of their relationship with the place defined at the national scale of Korea.

In sum, recently conducted research on local studies has shown the possibility of overcoming the methodological nationalism of traditional Korean studies by focusing on asymmetrical interrelations between states and locals and by approaching processes and phenomena on local or urban scales.



However, these studies do not suggest complete alternatives to overcoming the territorial trap or methodological nationalism; they still adopt factors given in sovereign / administrative territories when they choose study themes such as Korea, regions, and locals. Of course, many researchers have recently focused on the flow of globalization and localization and attempted to understand locals in connection to the processes operating at the “global” spatial scale, rather than just in terms of the state-local relationship. For example, Lee (2007, 201) described local studies as the epistemology of meaningful spaces that offer explanations on states and the world through studies of “local” areas, emphasizing that local studies should provide an understanding of Korean and global universalities based on research on local peculiarities. However, such an epistemology, which is based on a dichotomous perspective that assumes abstract / universal processes on global scales and concrete / peculiar processes on local scales, does not fully describe the ways in which scales are socially constructed and the “multi-scalar” dynamics of social, political, cultural, and historical processes (Park 2001).

### 3. Absolute Conceptions on Space Inherent in Korean Studies

The above-mentioned problems in the traditional Korean Studies are rooted in a lack of understanding of space. Both Korean and local studies are basically studies of regions and places. Therefore, their research subjects are not functionally categorized, but should be chosen on the basis of spatial classification. Thus, essential themes and inquiries in Korean Studies should include: (1) the spatial boundary of the subject area, (2) the construction processes of the space, (3) the relationship between research subjects and spatial scales, and (4) the relationship between places defined at different geographical scales. However, traditional Korean studies have paid little attention to such inquiries, except some studies on Korean localities. This problem has been caused by the absolute conceptions on space, which considers spaces to be passive containers of natural / social matters and phenomena; this view has been at the root of traditional studies and theories in humanities and social sciences. In other words, traditional Korean studies have followed an epistemology that considers social relations and processes to be separate from spaces and spatial processes.

Such an epistemology has overlooked the importance of spaces, narrowly conflating them just with physical spaces. Ko (2005) noted the importance of understanding spaces in local studies:

Understanding of spaces is from comprehension of physical environment: geography offers the starting point of such an understanding.... Geography plays a significant role in illuminating aspects and realities of locals through spatial perspectives. Studies that lack cognitions on land and physical environment will probably be nothing but abstract ideas.... Interpretations on the architectures (visual evidences), investigations on the contexts and situations formed by piled architectures, and the architectural perspective focusing on the stream of consciousness of communities indwelt within the contexts are the basis of geography (Ko 2005, 135).

The quotation above shows that even local studies, which tend to provide better recognition of the importance of space compared to traditional Korean studies, consider spatial dimensions to be mere matters of physical spaces, such as the natural environment and building structures.

Such an absolute conception of space regards social processes as separate from spaces, ignoring the intrinsic relationship between society and space and hindering the understanding of the ways in which space is socially produced and social processes are mediated through spaces. In particular, Korean and local studies, whose subjects and themes are regions and places, must understand the intrinsic relationship between space and society. However, as mentioned, traditional Korean and local studies have fallen prey to the territorial trap selecting their research themes and subjects based on sovereign / administrative territories. Consequently, they have overlooked the territoriality of the state, which is dynamically made and remade through the active interactions between space and society, and the multi-scalar nature of political, social, economic, cultural, and historical processes. With this problem orientation in mind, I would like to propose an alternative approach to Korean studies in the following sections. In particular, I will explore the possibilities of alternative Korean studies on the basis of the socio-spatial perspective emphasizing the intrinsic relations between space and society.

### III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIO-SPATIAL VIEWS IN HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

#### 1. Socio-spatial Dialectics

Several British-American critical geographers have investigated the theoretical relationships between space and society since the 1980s. They have criticized traditional perspectives that see space and society as separated from one another on the basis of the absolute views on space and begun to emphasize the intrinsic relationship between society and space. In particular, Edward Soja proposed the term “socio-spatial dialectics,” emphasizing the internal relationship between space and society (Lee 1997). According to Soja, modern western social theories ignored the meanings of spatial multiplicity, multi-dimensionality, differences, and simultaneity and emphasized linear flows of history and causal processes based on temporal order and sequence. He also claimed that they did not focus on spaces sufficiently; the theories were subsumed by despatializing historicism and focused on temporal changes in social factors that were assumed to be homogeneous in particular historical periods. Consequently, the development of capitalism had been understood as nothing but a historical process, and spaces had not been approached sufficiently (Lee [trans.] 1997, 17). As a result, modern social theories treated space as “the dead / the fixed / the undialectic / the immobile,” whereas time as “richness / fecundity / life / dialectic.”

Based on such logics, Soja emphasized the necessity of socio-spatial dialectics focusing on the process by which society and space influence and intermediate each other; he suggested that space and society should not be considered separately. In particular, Soja noted that space is socially produced and social processes are spatially mediated, suggesting the need for an awareness of “how space can be made to hide consequences from us, how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life, how human geographies become filled with politics and ideology” (Soja 1989, 6). He also argued that this process requires an ontological struggle to “restore the meaningful existential spatiality of being and human consciousness, to compose a social ontology

in which space matters from the very beginning” (Soja 1989, 7). In other words, understanding the fact that social beings are socially produced, but they are contextualized “in a multi-layered geography of socially created and differentiated nodal regions nesting at many different scales around the mobile personal spaces of the human body and the more fixed communal locales of human settlements” (Soja 1989, 8) is necessary.

## 2. Four Dimensions of Socio-Spatial Relations: Place, Territory, Network, and Scale

The socio-spatial dialectics proposed by Soja offered an important piece for understanding and conceptualizing the internal relationship between space and society. However, its abstract logic failed to explain the interactive and intermediating relations between space and society concretely. They did not offer proper explanations of the concrete mechanisms and processes of socially produced spaces or spatially mediated societies. However, recently, Jessop *et al.* (2008) approached internal socio-spatial relations and suggested an alternative ontology focusing on the following four dimensions: territory, place, scale, and network. According to this perspective, (1) social relations should be understood as socio-spatial relations because they are naturally combined with spatial dimensions, and (2) these socio-spatial relations consist of four significant dimensions: territory (produced by boundaries that divides a particular space or region from other spaces), place (produced through processes of localization and geographical embeddedness), scale (caused by vertically hierarchical differentiation), and network (consisting of linkage and nodal points) (Table 1).

### 1) Place

Place consists of three elements: location, locale, and sense of place (Agnew 1987). First, “location” is the fundamental element of place. All places must be located on a particular point on the Earth; locational representation, such as “this place is located here, and that place is located there,” is required. Second, “locale” means a physical setting, not only where social relations takes place, but also which enables the social relations to emerge. Not social relations in an abstract sense, but the actual social relations that take place in a real world

**Table 1.** Four Important Dimensions of Socio-Spatial Relations

Dimensions of Socio-Spatial Relations	Principles of Socio-Spatial Structuration	Associated Patterning of Socio-Spatial Relations
Place	- Proximity, spatial embedding, areal differentiation	- Construction of spatial specialization - differentiation of social relations horizontally among “core” versus “peripheral” places
Territory	- Bordering, bounding, parcelization, enclosure	- Construction of inside/outside divides - constitutive role of the ‘outside’
Network	- interconnectivity, interdependence, transversal or “rhizomatic differentiation	- Building networks of nodal connectivity - differentiation of social relations among nodal points within topological networks
Scale	- hierarchization, vertical differentiation	- Construction of scalar division of labor - differentiation of social relations vertically among ‘dominant’, ‘nodal’, and ‘marginal’ scales - multiscalar processes

Source: Jessop et al. 2008, modified by the author

is formed only through concrete practices of various individuals and agents. These concrete practices and actions occur within concrete environments consisting of cities, buildings, roads, gardens, rooms, desks, windows, walls, and so on. This is the production process of locales, and the physical environments based on such locales are places. Finally, “sense of place” means people’s subjective and emotional fellowship with a particular place. According to Agnew, people’s activities and social relations occur in spatial settings consisting of these three basic dimensions; particular meanings are given to that particular spatial location and places are constructed through these processes.

Places are also sites where people’s experiences are embodied, and hence it is a social structure constructed through people’s interactions (Pred 1984; Cresswell 2004). Such a perspective suggests that a place is not an independent entity given to actors in its inside, but a consequential outcome constructed by various internal and external actors. In addition, places include their own unique social structures and contextual causalities that emerge out of complex interactions among actors acting in and through itself,

which means that places have their own dynamics and meanings, which cannot be reduced to their constitutive elements (Zhou 1998). Such dynamics and causalities of places can reveal in a moment when “localized” events and actors “spatially embed” their relations in a place on the basis of their “geographical proximity”. Such spatial embedding induces other events and actors to become “localized” in that particular place, and the accumulated outcome of such a process is “areal differentiation” (Jessop *et al.* 2008). In other words, the processes of “localization” and “spatial embedding” are the critical factors that make up the dynamics and causalities of a place.

## 2) Territory

A territory is a unique form of place, which is produced by individuals’ or groups’ attempts to affect, influence, or control actions, interactions, or access by asserting and attempting to enforce control over a specific geographic area, which is often demarcated by certain kinds of boundaries (Sack 1983). Therefore, building boundaries that differentiate the inside and the outside is a significant element of territorialization. Moreover, territory is not pre-given, but materially and discursively constructed through socio-political processes. Consequently, whom to include, or exclude, among various people, events, and relations within, or out of, the territory, and how to set and maintain the spatial boundaries of a territory are tremendously important issues in the socio-political processes of territorialization.

As argued earlier, a place is continuously (re)constructed through interactions among various actors who exist either inside or outside of the place or cross over the place. Therefore, a place as a social construct may have noticeably various characteristics due to the complex interaction among various actors and its emerging causalities. However, actors that have strong local dependency and place-based interest might attempt to strengthen the territoriality of places they consider to be in their interests. Furthermore, they might attempt to improve the internal unity and exclusiveness of the place by insisting that particular characteristics of a place are its own unique and authentic natures, distinguishing between the inside and the outside of a place and emphasizing the cultural identities within a place; the territorialization of a place occurs as a result (Park 2006; Cox 2003; Harvey 1989).

Indeed, territories can be constructed at various geographical scales. Nation-states, based on nationalism and territorial sovereignty, are important territorial units. However, territories are formed on geographical scales that are either larger or smaller than nation-states. For instance, economic communities formed on scales larger than nation states, such as the European Union, are large territorial units because they differentiate their inside from the outside. Similarly, administrative divisions within a nation state are territorial units; private houses and estates are also territorial units kept by property rights and privacy (Storey 2001).

### 3) *Networks*

Network can be categorized as the socio-spatial dimension based on movement, flow, connectivity, and relationality, whereas places and territories are other socio-spatial dimensions focused on social relations and the exercise of power embedded in and adhered to a particular spatial position. Therefore, network approaches tend to focus on the topological relations among actors and places functioning as important nodes on networks, while paying much less attention to the physical, social, and political limitations and obstacles to movement and flows in space than the studies on place and territory. Consequently, traditional social theories regarding spatial matters within the limits of physical conditions, functions of architecture, and regional peculiarities based on absolute conceptions of space, have usually recognized networks as issues of aspatial dimensions and potentialities that weaken spatial limits. For instance, social network theories, which analyze and investigate the social networks between actors, tend to consider networks as a dimension of social relations, rather than a spatial matter. In addition, recent theoretical trends, which emphasize the significance of globalization and transnational networks, tend to recognize the network as an important momentum that causes the death of space and geography by overcoming the physical limits and obstacles of traditional spaces and places.

However, such perspectives stress only a particular aspect of the various spatial characteristics that occur in social-spatial interactions; in particular, it only pays attention to the ways in which social processes are spatially divided and fixed. Although spatial effects are significantly related to the ways in which social events, processes, relations and activities are fixed in particular

locations and their movements and flows are limited, blocked and divided by the friction of distance, it also intermediates remote social relations that are interconnected and moveable. This means that space is a medium that plays dualistic and conflicting roles, such as mobility versus fixity and linkage versus division, in society. In other words, network is a spatial dimension that emphasizes the aspect of mobility and linkage, whereas place and territory are the spatial dimensions that highlight the aspects of fixity and division; these aspects make up the dualistic nature of space.

#### 4) *Scale*

Traditionally, scale has been known as a cartographic concept that represents scale-down ranges on a map. However, “scale” as a dimension of the socio-spatial relations means a spatial scope within which certain physical, cultural, and social events, processes, and relations take place, operate and are stretched out (McMaster and Sheppard 2004). For example, Yellow Dust, a natural phenomenon that originates in Mongolia and has influenced South Korea and Japan, takes place and operate at the East Asian scale. The term “scale” is also used to describe whether a political or economic process works in a local, national, or global setting.

Indeed, scale can be understood as a spatial scope for the operation or occurrence of certain social or physical events or activities; it is not only an ontological dimension but also an epistemological matter. It is because the spatial scope for the operation or occurrence of particular social or physical phenomena is not ontologically pre-given and determined by the structures or orders of the material world, but materially and discursively constructed and reconfigured through political, social, and cultural processes (Smith 1993; Swyngedouw 1997; Brenner 2000; 2001; Marston 2000; Ryu 2007). An important point we can draw out of this discussion is that scale provides an important frame to represent and interpret the reality, and the frame is socially constructed (Delaney and Leitner 1997, 94-95). Positioning a particular social phenomenon on a specific spatial scale most likely influences the ways in which people perceive and interpret the phenomenon; thus, actors with conflicting interests may attempt to define the spatial scale of the same phenomena in different ways. In other words, scale is one of the important targets of power struggles and contentious politics between social



forces, and it is constructed materially and discursively through this process (Jung 2008).

By the way, the academic implications of discussions of scale are related to how to understand the relations between scales (Brenner 2001). Social processes occurring at different geographical scales are spatially differentiated in a vertical sense, whereas the dimensions of place or territory are generally related to spatial differentiation in a horizontal sense. Traditional discussions in the social sciences have tended to understand this vertical differentiation of geographical scales as a top-down hierarchical process; larger scales have more power and influence than smaller ones. Seeing the global-scale processes as the causes of “low rank” processes at the national or local scales (as argued in the world system theory and recent theories on globalization) is one example of such discussion. However, lately, many researchers in various fields have criticized such an epistemology and suggested understanding the vertical relations between scales as “multi-scalar” processes under which the processes at different scales are overlapping and influencing each other, rather than as top-down hierarchical relations (Park 2001; Park B. G. 2005; Park and Lee 2007). The problem of “methodological nationalism,” which I pointed out in earlier discussions on the traditional Korean studies, is related to the lack of “multi-scalar epistemology” in understanding the relations between diverse spatial scales.

### 3. Multi-scalar Networked Territoriality

Place, territory, networks, and scale are not simple spatial categories or metaphors, but need to be seen as four different moments of the concrete processes of socio-spatial dialectics through which space is socially produced and social processes are spatially mediated. By the way, these four dimensions of socio-spatial relations should not be understood as fixed and mutually exclusive. Also, any of the four dimensions should not be seen as more important or more influential than others. Recently, a new academic trend called “relational turn” has emerged under the influences of the growing criticism toward the traditional social theories that have fallen prey to the territorial trap by absolutizing the territoriality of the nation states. This trend suggests understanding the world through networks by seeing networks as

much more important than other dimensions of the socio-spatial relations, such as place, territory and scale.

In particular, researchers taking this position criticize traditional economic structuralism and methodological individualism, emphasizing the relations between diverse actors through network linkages; they also stress that such relations influence actors' perceptions of the world, discourses, and behaviors (Dicken *et al.* 2001). Researchers who attempt to understand socio-spatial processes and relations based on network linkage argue that actors influence one another through the network linkage and they can be interlinked limitlessly by extensions of such networks. Consequently, they usually consider territorial boundaries and place embeddedness as minor factors (Latour 1993). Sallie *et al.* (2005) criticized scalar discourses for contributing to the expansive reproduction of perceptions that regard territorial units as piled up vertically and hierarchically; they suggested the necessity of considering the horizontal expandability of socio-spatial relations based on network linkage. Such an attitude is the typical perception that considers the four dimensions of socio-spatial relations as separated, fixed, and exclusive factors.

Painter (2006) criticized this attitude, claiming that they tend to conceptualize territory and network as antithetical, contrasting and competing to one another. According to him, these studies characterized territory as a concept of static and resistance to change with major characteristics including boundedness, identity, integrity, sovereignty, and spatial coherence. In contrast, network is seen as a dynamic and deterritorializing concept with major characteristics including connections, flux, mobility, and hybrid identity. He proposed the term "networked territoriality" to overcome this dichotomy. In his conceptualization, territory is understood as the result of network effects, not as a spatiality that hinders or resists network linkages. In other words, territory is conceptualized as an influential zone where the power relations of actors who constitute the territoriality are practiced and reproduced through networks of those actors. For example, the territory of a nation state is not just the result of a national boundary on a map and public international law; it can be maintained only when various political, institutional, administrative, and military networks enable the nation state to practice and continuously reproduce its territorial

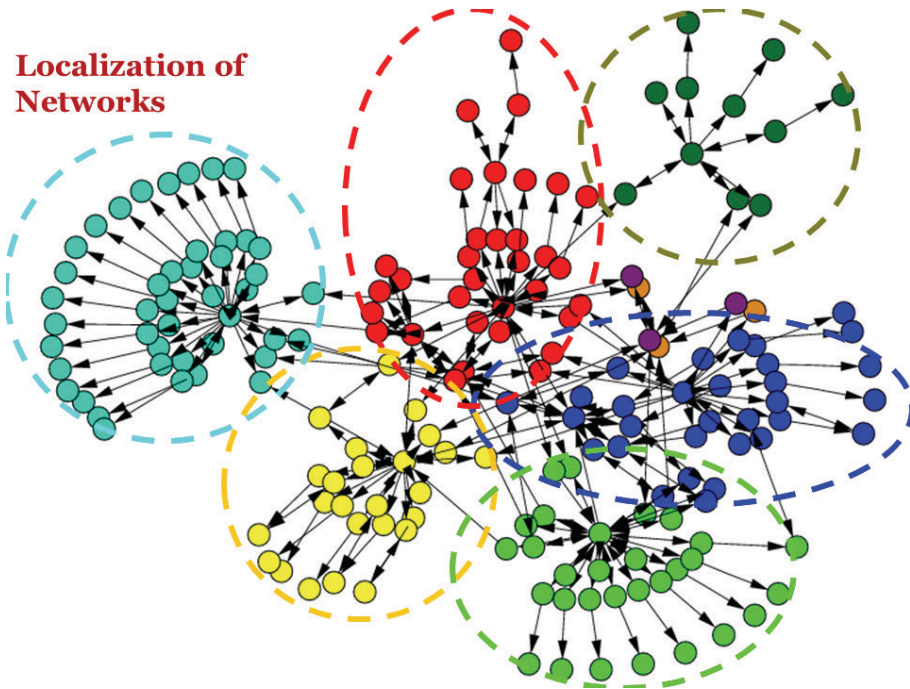


Figure 1. Localization of Networks

sovereignty in a particular spatial boundary.

In addition, network connectivity needs to be understood not just as a deterritorializing force, but a territorializing force. According to Painter (2006), although network can bring new actors into its linkage and expand its sphere continuously, its real patterns of linkage generally show unequal connections; the density and frequency of the linkages usually centered on particular nodes. In other words, linkages on a network do not occur everywhere isometrically, but they tend to strongly localize in specific places (Figure 1). The formation of industrial clusters, accumulations of enterprises with strong inter-firm connectivities in particular cities, is one of the most obvious examples of such a tendency (Koo 2010; Jeong, Park, and Song 2006; Park 2002). This means that network linkages show not only characteristics of deterritorialization but also characteristics of territorialization and reterritorialization through strong localization on particular places.

As the concept of networked territoriality offers effective explanations, the four dimensions of socio-spatial relations overlap, interconnect, and combine with one another tightly. Because the processes involved in the social production of space and spatially mediated social processes are noticeably dynamic, the four dimensions are able to represent only temporal moments of such dynamically changing socio-spatial relations. Furthermore, because the socio-spatial relations involved in particular social and geographical events and phenomena are very diverse and multiple, the four dimensions should be understood as constantly concurring and activating with overlapping, combination, and association. For instance, localization of network linkages produces places, and localized social relations are territorialized by the activation of power relations. Also, these places and territories, which are constructed on diverse scales, form a particular scalar configuration, and the combinations of social forces acting on various places, territories, and scales produce multi-level and multi-scalar socio-spatial relations.

The four dimensions of socio-spatial relations mutually link and overlap through complex and multi-layered processes. Thus, a simple and concrete explanation is not an easy work. Nevertheless, I will attempt to conceptualize the processes more concretely by focusing on a few selected mechanisms. This conceptualization can offer a more concrete understanding of socio-spatial relations, and such an understanding will be a significant basis developing more space-sensitive Korean Studies. This work focuses on conceptualizing the concrete mechanisms through which 1) places are constructed centered on certain localized networks, 2) social forces and processes are territorialized through the politics of scale and territorialization based on such places, and 3) these processes are interacting with one another with multi-scalar characteristics.

### *1) Localized Networks and Formation of Places*

Linkages of social actors and forces in spatial networks are not distributed isometrically, but they show strong unevenness. In other words, nodes and linkages on networks are generally centered on particular spatial points, which cause localization of network relations. In reality, localized network linkages occurs in various forms, including local labour markets, localized inter-firm transactions, localized information sharings, and localized housing

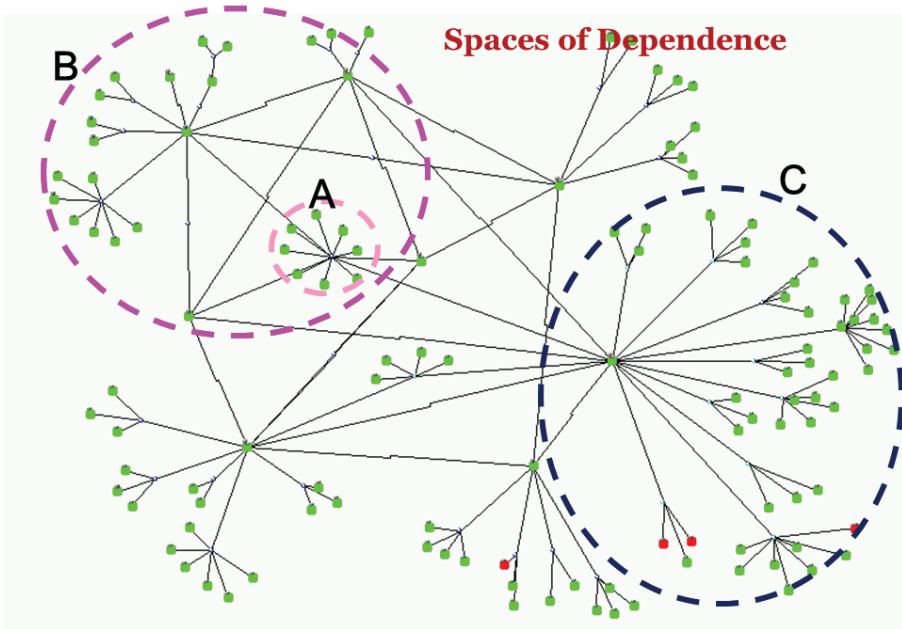


Figure 2. Localized Networks and Emergences of Places

markets.

Localized network linkages inevitably result in the rise of actors whose existence and reproduction depend upon such localized networks. These actors, depending on the localized networks, are restricted in their mobilities by the localized nature of the networks. Consequently, they are spatially fixed centered on particular locations. Such actors and localities are important foundations of place formation because they develop their senses of place and form their identities and connectedness in particular places. Such actors develop the “space of dependence.” The space of dependence refers to the spatial sphere of localized social relations on which the actors’ existence, reproduction, and identity maintenance depend (Cox 1998).

Figure 2 represents the ways in which places or spaces of dependence are formed. In this figure, places and spaces of dependence are formed based on networks localized on three points: A, B, and C. As Figure 2 shows, not all localized networks develop into places or spaces of dependence. Even though the place formation is based on the localization of networks, the relation

between them is very contingent. In other words, place formation does not occur through functional activation of localized networks but is related to historical processes and cultural identity formation. In addition, Figure 2 suggests the possibility that places and spaces of dependence can form in diverse spatial scales. Point B is an example in which places and spaces of dependence are centered on localized networks on a spatial scale larger than A; in this case, B includes A. Point C represents a case in which a place is formed that includes several localized networks constructed on small scales far from A and B.

## *2) Spaces of Engagement and the Expansion of Spatial Scales*

Actors with interests depending on localized network are willing to contribute to continual maintenance and reproduction of their localized network. Because the “space of dependence” is not an isolated island, it has no choice but to be influenced by movements and flows of values on larger spatial scales. In particular, these localized networks are unlikely to remain unchallenged under capitalism. The need for continuing accumulation promotes a restless search for new and more profitable ways of producing and circulating exchange values. As a result, the capitalist space economy is ever changing and continually being restructured (Harvey 1982). In such a situation, actors, who have developed locally dependent interests and place identities in a space of dependence, need to protect and maintain the localized social relations that they depend upon to maintain their interests and identities. They also engage in various political activities to meet their needs.

One political strategy that these locally dependent actors use is the mobilization of other actors with powers from other spatial scales by forming bigger political engagements and networks beyond the space of dependence. The spatial sphere where such political engagements and networks are formed is called the “space of engagement (Cox 1998).” In other words, actors who are fixed in particular places can construct the space of engagement on larger spatial scales through the politics of scale. Figure 3-1 represents a case in which actors dependent upon Point A form a space of engagement with actors from Point B and C, which have spatial scales larger than A. Such spaces of engagement exist only temporarily and then perish in numerous

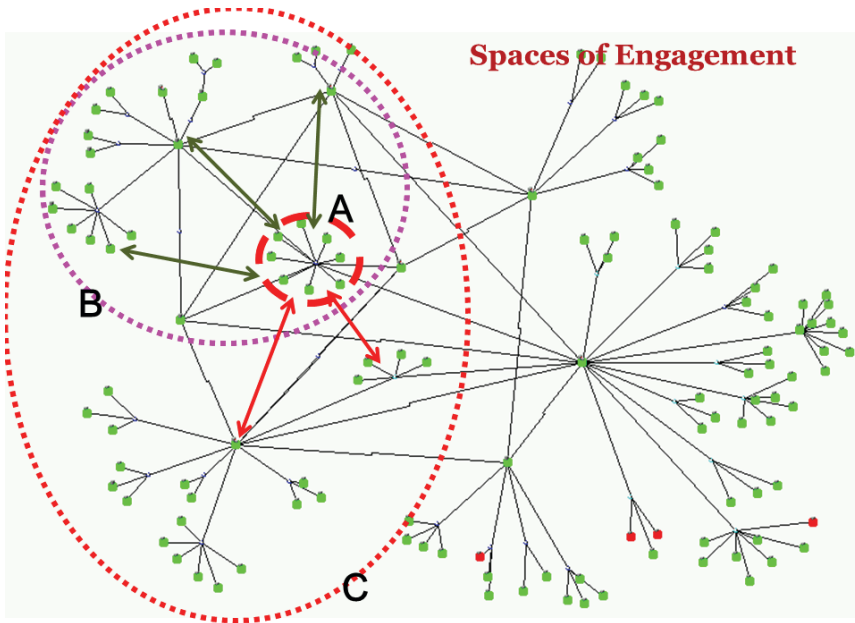


Figure 3-1. Spaces of Engagement and Jumping Scale I

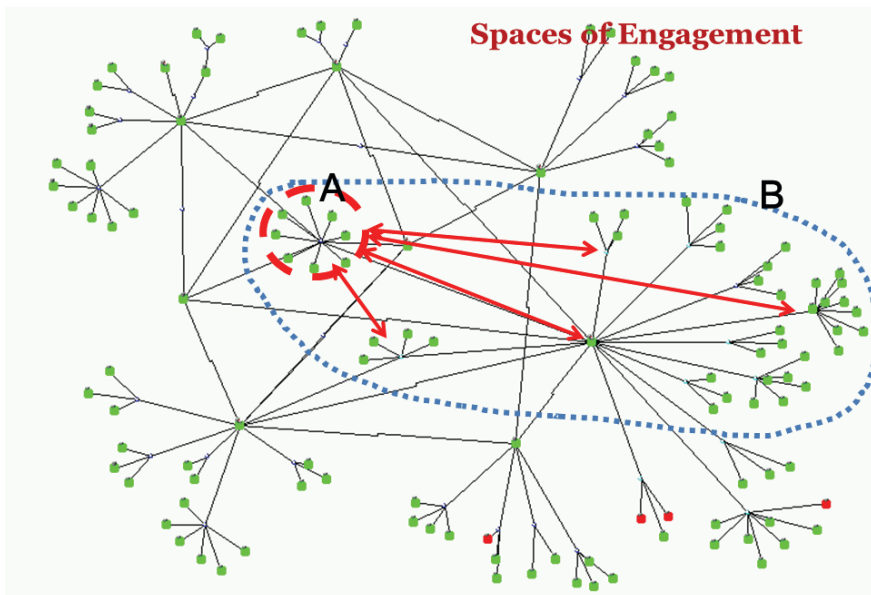


Figure 3-2. Spaces of Engagement and Jumping Scale II



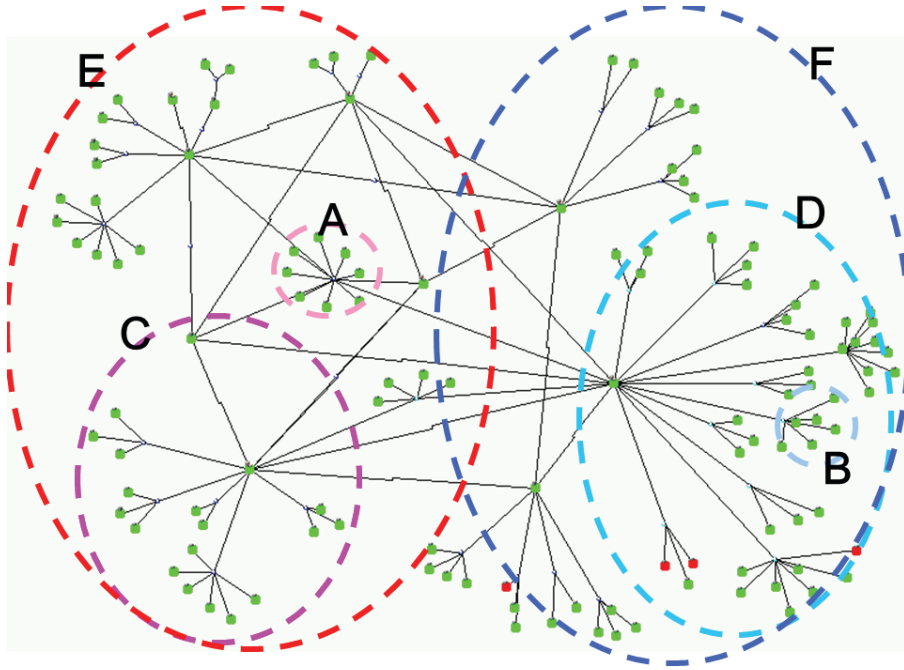


Figure 4. Places constructed at Diverse Geographical Scales

cases; however, in some cases, continuous and steady existence of the space of engagement leads to the expansion of spatial scales and settings of spaces of dependence and place formation. Figure 3-2 suggests that spaces of engagement are possibly formed in various ways, depending on situations and conditions.

### 3) Multi-scalar Processes and the Politics of Territorialization

As Figure 4 shows, localized networks are possibly formed on diverse geographic scales. Points A, B, C, D, E, and F in Figure 4 represent the places (or spaces of dependency) formed on diverse scales of the localized network. In this figure, E is a place formed on larger scales that includes A and C, while F is another place formed on larger scales that includes D and B. Moreover, although A and C are places on the same spatial scale (because they are not in a mutual-subsumption relation), D is spatially larger and includes B.

In such places, some place-dependent actors may mobilize the politics



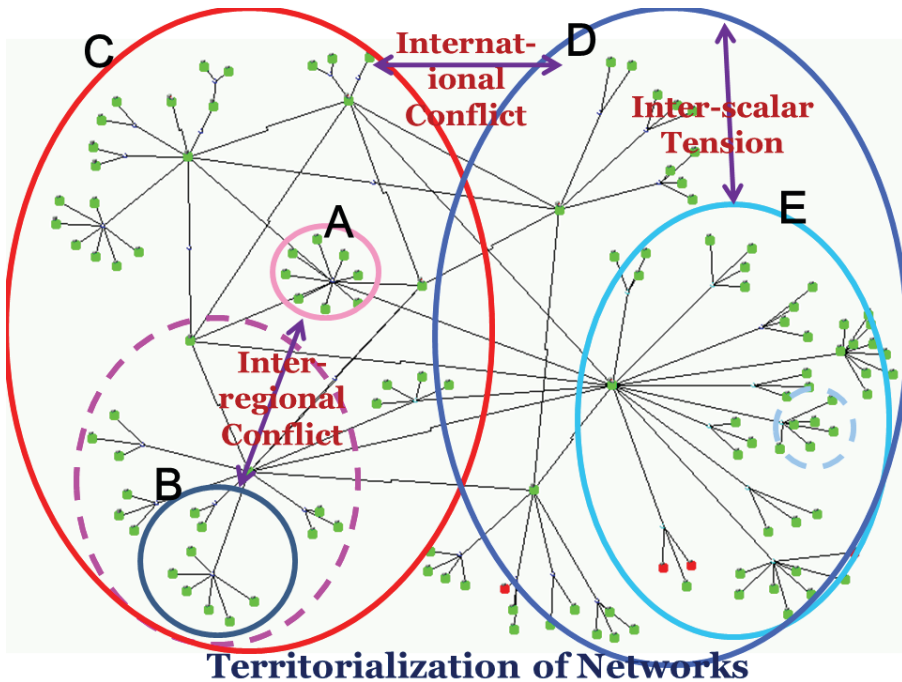


Figure 5. Territorialization of Networks

of territorialization in order to protect their space of dependence. In other words, they attempt to maintain their place-dependent interests and identities by constructing diverse territorial ideologies to improve their internal unity and solidarity, instead of adhering to the politics of scale, which attempts to draw power and force from other scales. As a result, a place can be converted to a territory. A, B, C, D, and E, the diagrams with dotted lines in Figure 4, are presented with solid lines in Figure 5. This displays the process that a place as a space of dependence with obscure boundaries and territory undergoes to change into a place with much more definite boundaries and territory.

In Figure 5, C and D, the two largest ovals, represent modern territory states, whereas A, B, and E stand for places in which territory politics, such as regionalism and separatism, are occurring vigorously. Tensions readily occur between such territorialized spaces, and Figure 5 exemplifies the process more concretely. Regional conflicts most likely take place between A and

B (places within a nation state), international conflicts possibly break out between C and D (modern territorial states), and inter-scalar tensions (e.g., conflicts between the central government and local governments) most likely occur between D and E (a spatial scale smaller than the national scale).

#### *4) Summary: Multi-scalar Networked Territoriality*

In the previous discussions, the concrete mechanisms through which the four dimensions of socio-spatial relations (place, territory, networks, and scale) are dynamically overlapping and interacting with one another are partially conceptualized. In this schematization, the following three factors were emphasized: (1) territory is activated by networks of social forces and systems, and networks can be spatially localized and sometimes territorialized (2) this “networked territoriality” can emerge at diverse spatial scales, and (3) multi-scalar processes, through which the territorialized forces working at various geographical scales are interacting with one another, can take place through the politics of scale that actors mobilize in order to influence the existing power relations. However, as mentioned earlier, the schematizations of the four dimensions in this article explains only a portion of the complex processes through which places, territories, networks, and scales interact and interconnect each others. Therefore, such schematizations do not offer complete explanations of the complex processes of the four dimensions’ relations. Nevertheless, these schematizations offer the insight that each dimension dynamically interacts in complex relations and transformations, rather than activating as a separate individual factors.

## IV. SOCIO-SPATIAL THEORIES AND THE POSSIBILITY OF ALTERNATIVE KOREAN STUDIES: SOCIO-SPATIAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE KOREAN DEVELOPMENTAL STATE

Explaining the development of capitalism in South Korea is one of the most important themes in Korean studies. Consequently, various arguments regarding the development of South Korean capitalism have been suggested, centering on history, sociology, and economics; the theory of colonial

modernization and the theory of the embryo of capitalism are examples of these arguments. While these two theories are the examples of the attempts to explain the development of Korean capitalism made by the Korean scholars, an important theoretical trend to explain the Korean capitalism made by the scholars in the international academic circles was based on the so-called “developmental state thesis.”

Actually, the developmental state thesis was suggested not to explain the development of Korean capitalism, but to explain the rapid economic growth of East Asian countries such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore. In particular, Johnson (1982) noted that the following two factors were the decisive causes of rapid Japanese economic growth in 1960s and 70s: (1) national bureaucrats, who were autonomous from the private interests, played a leadership role in national economic growth with proactive interventions in the market, and (2) the government drove national economic growth through market-conforming practices, rather than through market-replacing planning practices. He called the states that possess the capacity to fill such roles “developmental states.” Johnson’s proposal, the developmental state thesis, which is antagonistic to the liberal perspective that has emphasized the role of free trade in explaining the economic growth of the East Asian newly industrializing countries, has been recognized as an important explanation of the economic growth of East Asian countries in the western academia. This perspective has also influenced the South Korean scholars. Accordingly, it has brought about some interesting debates among the Korean scholars regarding the role of the state in the development of Korean capitalism.

The developmental state thesis, however, has been widely criticized for its neo-Weberian assumption of a strict separation between the state and society, in the sense that it overly emphasizes the ability of the state bureaucrats, who are assumed to be autonomous from the social forces and private interests, to control and regulate the economic activities in the market. Along with this widely recognized criticism, we can point out two additional problems of the developmental state thesis from our socio-spatial perspective.

First, the developmental state thesis presumes that developmental states are based on the spatiality of developmental regulations that function exclusively within the territory of a nation-state. On the basis of this perception, the developmental state thesis sharply distinguishes the inside



Figure 6. Territorial Trap in the Studies of Korean Capitalism

(or the domestic/national) and the outside (or the international), and tries to explain the economic growth or capitalist development of East Asian countries by focusing on the state-led developmental regulatory orders, which are assumed to operate inside the national territories. In this sense, this thesis is concluded to have fallen prey to the territorial trap. In other words, the developmental state thesis is territorial insofar as the boundaries of each developmental state are said to either contain or exclude the regulatory order of developmentalism.

Second, the developmental state thesis puts its main focus on the political, social, economic, cultural, and historical processes working at the national scale, while paying very little attention to either the geopolitical and geo-economic relations and processes at supra-national scales, including the scales of East Asia, the Pacific Rim, and global, or the processes at various sub-national scales (e.g. the local and urban scales). This means that the developmental state thesis is underpinned by the methodological nationalism. The developmental state thesis tends to focus only on processes

at the national scale, although the developmental process of South Korean capitalism has been influenced by not only state-centered political-economic processes but also by complex geopolitical, political, and economic processes occurring between South Korea, China, and Japan and between the central government and localities. In particular, the relations between the state and localities have been traditionally explained on the basis of a logic that emphasizes the superiority of the state over localities in South Korea. More specifically, the state-locality relations in the years of the developmental state, which had actively intervened in the economic activities on the basis of highly centralized and authoritarian political powers, have been conceptualized as a unidirectional relationship in which localities were constituted and controlled by the state. Therefore, many studies have strictly distinguished the national and the international dimensions, and have focused on the national processes through which developmental regulatory mechanisms are constituted through interactions and power relations among the state, capital and labor at the national scale. In addition, they assume that the regulatory surface of developmental state is smooth, homogenous and encompassing within its national territory. Thus, the developmental regulatory mechanisms at the national scale have been assumed to activate equally over the length and breadth of the national territory, with locals as its passive reflections (Figure 6).

Such a national-scale centered understanding cannot properly address the variegated nature and multi-scalar, trans-border processes of Korean capitalist development. In particular, it ignores the possibilities that local dependency and spatial embeddedness of the state and social actors could occur on various spatial scales. Consequently, many researchers have tended to focus only on the national-scale actors, such as the central government officials, Federation of Korean Industries, head offices of enterprises, central politicians, and so on, while treating the importance of diverse transnational and local actors and processes lightly. Moreover, they have overlooked the impacts of the geographical unevenness occurring on diverse spatial scales and the subsequent spatial differences in connectivity, mobility, and territoriality of social relations on social, political, economic, and cultural processes. For instance, traditional studies have failed to examine how the Korean capitalist development has been influenced by uneven developments at the global scale, international division of labor, transnational connectivity

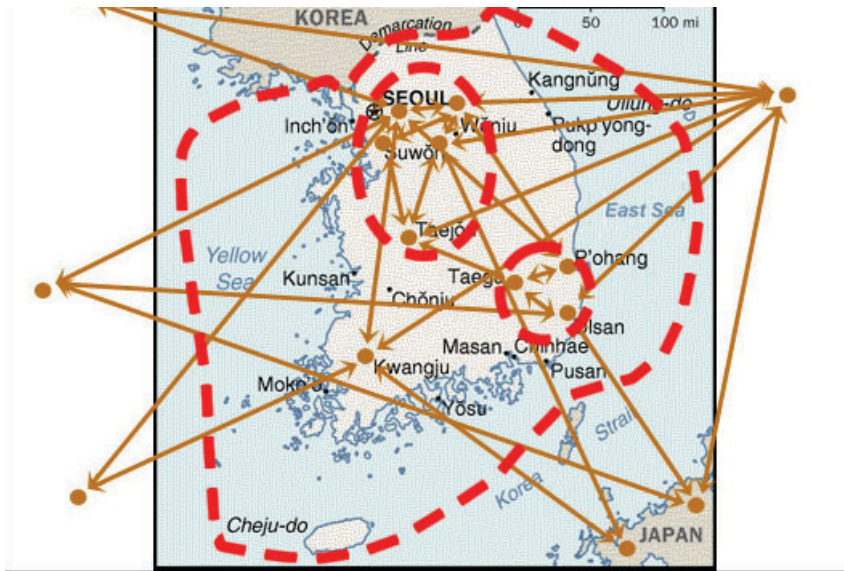


Figure 7. Multi-scalar Networked Territoriality of South Korea

of capital and the state, the inter-regional or inter-urban differences in local-scale connectivity, the spatial selectivity of the state, uneven regional development within the national territory, inter-regional differentiation in political mobilization, etc. Some important factors explaining the political and economic processes involved in the development of Korean capitalism, on the basis of “multi-scalar networked territoriality,” could help to provide an alternative to the problems seen in the developmental state thesis (Figure 7).

First, the networked territoriality of the Korean developmental state should be considered. Modern nation-states are basically territorial communities; thus, explaining a developmental state necessarily requires its territoriality. The territoriality of a state is not pre-given and static, but constituted and reproduced by the institutions, mechanisms and apparatuses that enable the governmentality of the state to work on the basis of the networked social relations. Therefore, territorially designed regulatory activities of a developmental state should be understood with regards to the various factors constituting the territoriality of the state, including politics, societies, economies, and institutional networks.

In addition, places or territories can be formed and exist on various spatial scales, and such diverse places and territorial communities are interconnected via multifarious scalar networks. Networks that are formed over or across such places, territories, and scales improve the flows and movements of information, people, resources, and capital. In other words, while networks are able to produce and strengthen the spatial fixity and territoriality by means of localization centered on a particular place or territory, it can also weaken them by promoting flows and movements over several places and territories. For this reason, Korean studies should also understand how networks that are formed over or across such places, territories, and scales weaken and transform the spatiality and territoriality of developmental regulation.

Second, Korean studies should investigate the transnational connectivity more deeply. From the perspective of networked territoriality, the territoriality of the state needs to be understood as a process involving the powers and institutions of territorialization, which are produced centered on the networks, operating mainly at the national scale, which are also linked to the transnational web of networks, rather than as a dichotomous division of the national and the international. Therefore, understanding what effects transnational networks of enterprises, global policy networks, and networks of global circulation of capital have on the decision making and activities of the Korean development state is important for understanding the Korean capitalist development. In this regard, Jessop and Sum (2006) explained the economic growth of East Asian countries in the frame of “exportist mode of accumulation,” paying more attention to the international networks that were formed between these countries and the USA and European countries (their major export markets), rather than the national-scale political and economic processes of these countries. Additionally, Glassman and Choi (2010) described the effects of global production networks and “transnational class alliances,” formed by capitalists and the government elites of USA, South Korea and Japan in the cold war period, on the economic growth of South Korea.

Third, Korean studies should approach relations between the state and localities with multi-scalar perspectives. For this, methodological territorialism, which regards locals (or regions) as nothing but administrative



districts of a state, should be altered. Instead, locals or regions need to be understood as the result of a process in which social relations are spatially concretized and embodied centered on particular place(s). Therefore, studies on regions should be based on research on political, social, economic, and cultural processes that are influential in the production and reproduction of regions and political activities and processes that draw these processes. To avoid a state-centered (or centralized) approach to the state-locality relations, the activities of the state need to be understood not as an outcome of the national-scale political, social, and economic processes, but as constructed through interactions among various social actors and forces acting, in and through the state, and at various spatial scales, such as the global, national, local, and urban. In this sense, Korean studies should consider locals to be influential parts of the national processes on the basis of the processes of territorialized political mobilization, not as passive objects. In addition, the studies need to acknowledge that the interactive process between the state and localities occurs not only at the national and local scales, but at diverse supra-national and sub-national scales; thus, the state-locality interactive processes need to be understood in terms of the social networks and power struggles that are shaped and emerging beyond and across various states, regions, cities, places and scales.

## V. CONCLUSION

This article noted the crisis in traditional Korean studies resulting from a lack of spatial sensibility. The socio-spatial perspectives should be introduced, focusing on the intrinsic relations between space and society, to overcome the crisis. In particular, this research focused on the four important dimensions of socio-spatial relations, including place, territory, network, and scale, and discussed their overlaps, articulations, and dynamic interactions by using the concept of “multi-scalar networked territoriality” to specify the socio-spatial perspectives. Furthermore, this article briefly investigated possibilities for understanding the development of South Korean capitalism, also based on this concept.

From the perspective of socio-spatial theories, Korea, the topic of Korean



studies, is a social space. Moreover, this social space is not an independent entity with its own unity. Korea, a social space, is a portion of several larger social spaces, including Earth, East Asia, and the Pacific Rim, and consists of multiple smaller social spaces, such as cities, localities, villages, apartment complexes and so on. In other words, “Korea” is both a portion of multiple diverse and divided social spaces and an articulated combination of them. The following statement by Lefebvre (1991) is helpful for understanding the dialectics between the part and the whole on the social spaces of “Korea”:

We are confronted not by social space but by many - indeed, by an unlimited multiplicity or uncountable set of social spaces which we refer to generically as ‘social space.’ No space disappears in the course of growth and development: *the worldwide does not abolish the local*...The social space, and especially urban space, emerged in all its diversity – and with a structure far more reminiscent of flaky *mille-feuille* pastry than of the homogeneous and isotropic space of classical (Euclidean/Cartesian) mathematics (Lefebvre 1991, 86).

The socio-spatial perspectives can tremendously help us to see the political, social, economic, cultural and historical processes in terms of spatial differences, coexistence, and multiplicities. The territorial trap must be avoided to understand Korea and the lives of the Korean people from such perspectives. Such an understanding is helpful for explaining the ways in which Korea as a place has been constructed through the multi-scalar interactions that the social processes differentially taking place at different spatial scales (e.g. the global, national, regional, local, urban, and town scales) make with one another on the basis of territorialized relations and networked connectivities. Therefore, this understanding is essential for investigating the changing aspects of Korea and the Korean people’s lives in the era of globalization and localization. In conclusion, considering Korea as a sole homogeneous space, a trend that has fallen prey to de-spatialized historicism, is not necessary in Korean studies. Korean studies need to investigate Korea and the Korean people’s lives with the understanding that Korea is a place that has been produced by the overlapping and intertwining of various social places with infinite heterogeneities and multiplicities.

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